

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

ing Baku. The government of the free Republic of Azerbaijan, residing in Elizabetspol (Gandja), was friendly to the Turks; the co-operation promised to reconquer Baku from the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik Committee in Baku was unwilling to relinquish its authority in favor of the All-Islam Army, but it was not prepared to ask the British for assistance. Besides this official committee there existed an unofficial Armenian council in the city. To the Armenians the prospect of being conquered by the fanatical Moslems army was frightening, and so the council, through its secret committees, urged Dunster-ville to change his plans and to come to Baku instead of to Tiflis in order to put up resistance to the approaching Turko-Tatar army. For a while these urgings did not seem to be very realistic, because before defending Baku against the Turks Dunster-ville would have to conquer it from the Bolshevik Committee.

But on July 26 an event occurred in Baku that changed the whole situation and opened promising vistas to the British. The Socialist Revolutionary Party, an old enemy of the Communists, made a successful *coup d'etat*, overthrew the existing regime, and put under arrest the members of the Bolshevik Committee, including two dictators, Shaumian and Petrov. The victorious party set up a new regime under the official name of the Centro-Caspian Dictatorship, directed by five dictators. The new government was not identical with the Armenian council, but it was eager to obtain British help and, consequently, without delay addressed an appeal to Dunster-ville for assistance.

Dunster-ville, who, during the summer, had

received reinforcements from Mesopotamia of about a thousand men and some field guns and armored cars, was ready to go to Baku. Me successfully crossed the dangerous Gilan territory infested by Kudiik Khan's guerrillas, made a deal with the Enyeli Bolshevik Committee, which permitted him to embark on ships supplied by the Baku dictators, and, on August 16, 1918, sailed for Baku. Arrived there the next day, Dunsterville found in the city two strange groups of prisoners held by the Socialist Revolutionary dictators: one group was composed of the recently dethroned Bolshevik commissars and their followers; the other was Germans. The Bolsheviks had planned an